

Coronavirus in Indian Communities is growing

The deadly coronavirus accelerated its spread throughout Indian Country during the last week, as the number of confirmed cases doubled. By Sunday evening, April 5, 2020, the number of positive cases of COVID-19 in Indian Country had grown to 458, according to a database created by *Indian Country Today*. Data from the Indian Health Service, last updated on April 4, shows 436 confirmed positive cases. At least 22 individuals have died, according to estimates, with more than half of the deceased on the Navajo Nation.

As of Sunday night, there were 358 cases of the virus and 12 confirmed deaths related to COVID-19 on the Navajo Reservation. The New York Times reported that the Navajo Nation is ranked 13th in the world for COVID-19 cases per thousand and has drawn national media attention as the number of cases multiplies daily and its health facilities strain to keep up. The 175,000 citizens include many who live in remote areas without electricity or running water.

Other tribes in the southwestern U.S. have reported confirmed positive cases and, in a few cases, deaths from COVID-19. The Gila River Indian Community in Arizona, which had six confirmed cases of COVID-19, reported its first death from the virus on Sunday.

While the majority of confirmed cases on reservations have been reported in southwestern states and the Pacific Northwest, tribes in other parts of the country have begun to see their first cases. The Fort Berthold Indian Reservation in western North Dakota, which is home to the Three Affiliated Tribes which includes the Mandan, Hidasta and Arikara tribes, reported eight new confirmed positive cases on Saturday, according to a community impact dashboard created by the tribe's Transportation Director, Scott Satermo and his team. As of Saturday, the Three Affiliated Tribes, reported 15 total confirmed positive cases on the reservation. White Earth Reservation, in northern Minnesota has had three confirmed cases, the most recent occurring in the Pine Point Community, located in the south eastern corner of the reservation.

We must all be mindful to stay healthy, monitor our own health and that of our family, limit travel, when possible, check on our elders who are most vulnerable, and keep our children safe. Now is not the time to visit relatives, or for large families to congregate. Stay in contact through telecommuting: social media, telephone, video chat, etc. Practice safe distancing. Remember to wash your hands frequently and wearing a mask when out in public. Stay safe, stay strong, and remember, we will get through this!

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